

# BERKHAMSTED REVIEW

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## In and around Berkhamsted

by 'BEORCHAM'

### Street Names

Finding suitable names for new roads is not easy. No one, I imagine, would care to live in Tunnel Road, a name which has *not* been chosen for one of the new roads on what is popularly called Tunnel Field. According to the tithe map it was Spring Field, so what could be more appropriate than Spring Field Road?

Names for other roads in this area include Long View, Beckett Square, Haynes Road, Sayer's Gardens, and Page's Croft. Apart from Long View, which I recommend to politicians, these names have been suggested for historical reasons. Thomas Beckett, Archbishop of Canterbury, held Berkhamsted Castle for several years and his Castle fields included the new housing estate. Similarly, John Sayer, of almshouse fame, would have been familiar with the fields when he was steward of the manor. Earlier in the 17th century, Spring Field and several adjoining fields were farmed by Oliver Haynes.

As for Page's Croft, this perpetuates the name of a family who farmed land on the west side of Billet Lane in Victorian times. If the farmer, John Page, was not so famous as Polly and other namesakes at the King's Arms Inn, he did at least get his name in the papers in 1853.

### A Railway Disaster

John Page was working near the railway when he heard a loud crash. A wheel came off

the locomotive of a north-bound express, causing the engine to crash into the steep bank. Two carriages were shattered and the lines (only two at that time) were blocked.

The disaster occurred in the deep cutting about 450 yards east of Northchurch tunnel, and John Page raced towards the tunnel to warn the driver of the London-bound express of the wreckage ahead. The driver shut off steam but could not stop the train until it had crashed into the carriages that straddled the line.

The guard of the first train was killed, and many passengers, among whom were Lord Lonsdale and Baron Rothschild, were injured. "Action at Once"

I hope that all readers of the *Review* (and many others) will read a new booklet entitled "Action at Once." It is a short history of Church social work in our Deanery, and Marjorie Shaw and Margaret Bowden are to be congratulated on tackling a subject which local historians are apt to neglect.

What discreet, kindly help has been given to very many people since "a suitable lady worker" was engaged at a salary of £36 a year half a century ago. In some circles it was thought that advice and help would "make bad girls worse," but a start was made at the right time. During the 1914-18 War many new moral problems arose, there was a big increase in illegitimate births, and the committee, almost in despair,

reported that "there is so very much going on that is undesirable."

But this was only at the start of a splendid and continuing service. Do get a copy of the booklet and read it from start to finish.

### Local Setting

Speaking of books, I hear that we are to have a new Graham Greene novel with a local setting. At any rate, a leading character is a Mr. Castle (splendid local name!) who lives in Berkhamsted, commutes to London and cycles to the railway station from his home in King's Road.

I seldom read a novel, but this is one I shall have to buy. Local colour—*our* local colour—is something one rarely finds in a work of fiction!

### The Dudswell Forge

The Berkhamsted Art Society's 50th anniversary exhibition was worth several visits. I was especially pleased to see a selection of water-colours by a founder member of the Society, Mr. Leonard Saunders. Already some of his pictures have historic interest.

His watercolour of the canal-side forge at Dudswell (demolished many years ago) was especially interesting to me, for I recall interviewing Albert Pocock when he was about to retire after 66 years at the anvil. He recalled a time when he shod up to 100 barge horses a week. Sometimes he was aroused at 4 a.m. by barges who tried to create new records with their "express" boats to London. Rivalry was cruel as well as keen, for horses sometimes collapsed and died from the strain.

Donkeys and mules were also used for pulling the boats, and Mr. Pocock said that they always worked in pairs. Woe betide anyone who tried to separate them! A donkey could never be induced to enter the forge unless accompanied by its mate.

What especially pleased me was to hear Mr. Bedford say that his father and uncle worked together for 40 years and never had a cross word. And I loved his story about deep snowdrifts near Rossway which brought his grandfather's wagon to a full stop. The situation seemed desperate until a farmer told him to remove the two horses while he brought a ferocious bull to take their place. The bull was harnessed with difficulty, but in a minute or two he had the wagon on the move again. This, I was assured, was not a cock and bull story but a genuine horse and bull story.

### Ringling the Changes

Old memories were stirred when someone asked if it is true that at one period the bells of St. Peter's were formerly in St. Mary's, or vice versa.

How this story originated I cannot say; I heard it several times in my youth and was told that the exchange was made because the bells of St. Mary were too heavy for the tower.

Like so many old stories that were told around the fireside, it was nonsensical.

### LEPROSY MISSION

The amount raised at the annual coffee morning in the Court House in aid of the Leprosy Mission on October 20th was £73. Phials opened on that day contributed a further £23. Thanks are given to all friends and helpers for their support.

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